Johnson Grass *Sorghum halepense*

Description: Johnson grass is a tall, coarse, grass with stout rhizomes. It grows in dense clumps or nearly solid stands and can reach 8 feet (2.4 meters) in height. Leaves are smooth, 6-20 inches (15.2-50.8 cm) long, and have a white mid vein. Stems are pink to rusty red near the base. Panicles are large, loosely branched, purplish, and hairy. Spikelets occur in pairs or threes and each has a conspicuous awn. Seeds are reddish-brown and nearly 1/8 inch (0.3 cm) long.

Distribution
Originally native to the Mediterranean, this grass now occurs in all warm-temperate regions of the world. It is widely distributed in tropical America, common in the southern U.S., and distributed throughout most of Illinois. It is particularly common in cultivated river bottoms, especially along the Mississippi, Ohio, and Cache River bottoms.

Habitat: This species occurs in crop fields, pastures, abandoned fields, rights-of-way, forest edges, and along stream banks. It thrives in open, disturbed, rich, bottom ground, particularly in cultivated fields.

Control: The best control option for this perennial weed is the integration of land preparation, crop rotation and rational chemical treatments.

Good Control Program includes: 1. Prevent production and spread of seed. 2. Destroy seedlings before rhizomes are formed. 3. Weaken and kill existing rhizomes. 4. Control new infestations as they appear.

For heavy infestation: Seed panicles should be cut and removed from the area where practical. Dense patches can be controlled by spraying the foliage with 2% Roundup (a formulation of glyphosphate) during June, just prior to seed maturity. Care should be taken to avoid contacting non-target plants, since Roundup is a nonselective herbicide. **Do not spray so heavily that herbicide drips off the target species.** The herbicide should be applied while backing away from the area to avoid walking through wet herbicide.

For light infestation: Clumps and individual plants may be hand pulled during June, just after a rain when the ground is soft. All plant parts should be removed from the area. Broken stems and roots left in the ground should be dug up if only a small area is involved. It is more effective to spot-treat the individual plants with herbicide than to pull them, and large clumps can be sprayed with 2% Roundup using a hand sprayer or backpack sprayer. Herbicide treatment may need to be repeated for several years to ensure good control.

References: http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu, www.conservation.state.mo.us, www.hear.org/pier/species/sorghum_halepense.htm, www.inhs.uiuc.edu/chf/outreach/VMG/johngrass.html